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Routzahn, Mary Swain

Old South Brooklyn  
neighborhood survey

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1913

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OLD SOUTH BROOKLYN  
NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

308  
Z

Box 143

BOUNDARIES: Atlantic Avenue, Gowanus Canal and New York Bay

By

MISS MARY B. SWAIN

with the co-operation of the  
Department of Surveys and Exhibits  
Russell Sage Foundation

Made for

MRS. CORNELIUS ZABRISKIE

February, 1913

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## INTRODUCTION

The field of observation in this brief study, while relatively small in actual territory, includes a population of over 100,000 people. Obviously, it is out of the question in a few weeks study, to obtain any complete set of facts about any of the social conditions in what is really a good sized city. This survey aimed only to be a bird's eye view of the work already being done for social betterment in the district, of the ways in which <sup>various</sup> individual efforts were related to each other, and of some of the neighborhood needs which could be met either by an individual church or by uniting all the neighborhood forces.

The topics are developed under the following heads:

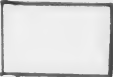


INTRODUCTION	V. DELINQUENCY
I. NATIONAL GROUPS	VI. SCHOOLS
II. HOUSING	VII. INDUSTRIES
III. HEALTH	VIII. RECREATION
IV. CHARITABLE WORK	CONCLUSION

The report includes:

- 1 - The written summary or report.
- 2 - A card file giving detailed information about the various topics summarized in the report and the names and addresses of persons from whom information was obtained.
- 3 - A series of large maps showing: -

- (1) Relative density of population in different sections.
- (2) Distributions of nationalities.
- (3) The various social agencies within the district.
- (4) The distribution of poverty, and bad home conditions,  
as indicated by the records of charitable organizations.

# THE FIELD OF A NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY SHOWING

	subjects not touched upon		subjects mentioned briefly		subjects emphasized
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I HEALTH	Prevention of disease	Public health work	Tuberculosis	Sex hygiene	Infectious diseases
	Infant mortality	School inspection	Hospital service	Visiting nurse assn	Inebriety
	Vital Statistics	Dental Inspection	Popularizing health knowledge	Milk supply and pure foods	Sewage and garbage disposal
II CEVICS	Civic Improvement	Congestion	City schools	Distribution of population	Public recreation
III SOCIAL CONTROL	Minors' Courts	Police problem	Probation	Control of prostitution	Juvenile delinquency
IV SOCIAL FORCES	Churches	Settlements	Charitable societies	Boys and mens clubs	Girls' Clubs
V INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS	Labor relationships	Scientific management	Prevention of accidents	Factory sanitation	Women in industry
	Child labor	Bureaus for handicapped	Industrial education	Mendicancy	Unemployment

# GENERAL MAP OF COMMUNITY



The outside boundaries are more nearly the natural divisions. They correspond very closely with the boundaries of the 2nd Assembly District, New York State, which is the District of the Butler Street Court.

The 28th School District.

The Twelfth (12th), tenth (10th), and part of sixth (6th) Wards.

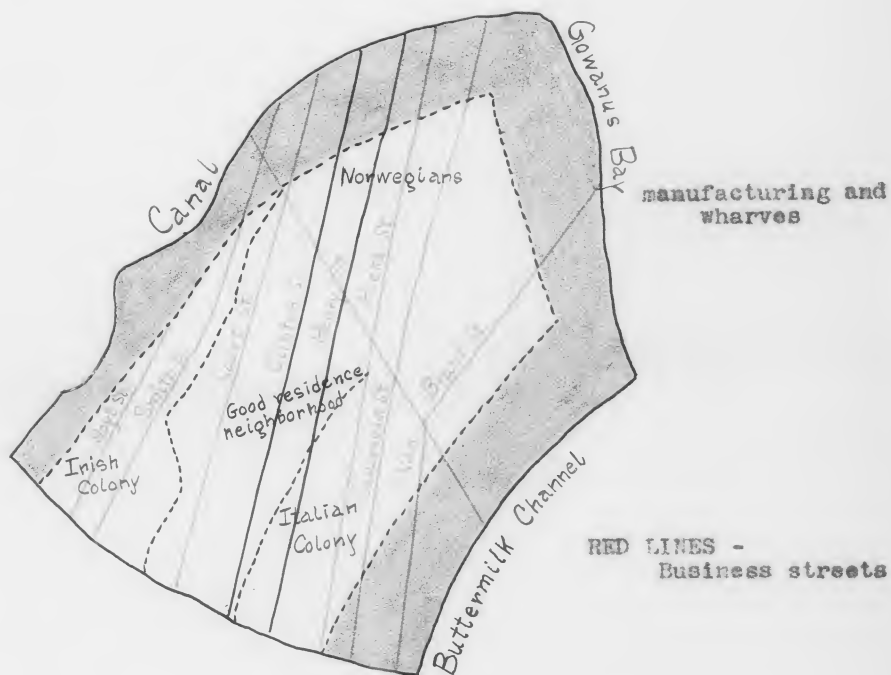
The inner boundaries were chosen arbitrarily for more intensive study, particularly with reference to the South Congregational Church.



### Boundaries

The district selected for study is twenty-four blocks long and ten blocks wide at the widest point. It is commonly known as Red Hook District, sometimes as Old South Brooklyn. A brief description contained in the Survey of Brooklyn by the Men and Religion Forward Movement gives the following: "No material change in property values. Slum development rapid, overcrowding, very old housing". There are several distinct types of neighborhoods so that it is comparatively simple to characterize the district in a general way. For example, taking the South Congregational Church as a center, the immediate neighborhood for about three blocks across and six blocks in length is made up of American-born families some of whom still own their homes in spite of shifting conditions in the neighborhood. Back of this district, extending to the Buttermilk Channel, is a large Italian colony which is rapidly expanding in three directions and in some cases has jumped over intermediate neighborhoods and captured single blocks in other parts of the district. In the vicinity of the Canal is a large Irish section making up the parishes of two Catholic churches. Beyond the South Congregational Church neighborhood and toward the Bay are many Scandinavians. Several streets in this locality are made up largely of the more prosperous Norwegians and still farther toward the Bay are the poorest of the Norwegians, Scandinavians, Germans and Irish. In parts of the Erie Basin there is a mixed group of Germanland Irish who have intermarried to some extent.

ROUGH MAP INDICATING GENERAL FACTS OF THE DISTRICT



See large Map No. 2 for more accurate distribution of nationalities.

# I. NATIONAL GROUPS

Classified population figures for the whole of the neighborhood are not available. Inasmuch, however, as the whole area studied coincides roughly with the 2nd Assembly District, those figures are presented to indicate the extent of the various national groups in the neighborhood.

## Census 1910

Compiled by the New York Federation of Churches

Boundaries 2nd District: Atlantic Avenue, Court Street, Bergen Street, Havins Street, Carroll Street, Gowanus Canal, New York Bay, Buttermilk Channel, Atlantic Avenue.

Total population - - - - -	103,000	Per cent.
Foreign born whites - - - - -	40,148	39.00
Native of foreign parentage, both parents, - - -	38,499	34.40
Native of foreign parentage, one parent - - - -	8,606	8.34
Native of native parentage - - - - -	18,365	17.79
Negroes - - - - -	815	.50
Other colored - - - - -	74	.07
	103,207	100.00

Immigrants since 1905 - - - - - 9,873

The first two groups above are further classified, as follows:

	Foreign born	Native born Parentage foreign	TOTAL Foreign birth and parentage
Irish	9,147	14,828	23,975
Italian	15,004	8,757	23,761
Norwegian	5,490	2,045	7,535
German	2,621	3,077	5,698
Swedish	1,540	968	2,508
English	1,501	690	2,191
Russian	1,149	728	1,877
Finnish	126		126
Austro-Hungarian	689	325	1,014
All others	2,881	955	3,836
Mixed foreign parentage		3,126	3,126
One foreign parent			8,606
	<u>40,148</u>	<u>35,499</u>	<u>84,253</u>

#### Speech Classification

Scandinavian	10,623
Teutonic	5,881
Latin	24,247
Yiddish, Polish	
English speaking foreign	27,766
Slovak Magyar	7,130
Native white, native parentage	18,365
$\frac{1}{2}$ native	8,606
Negroes	515
Other colored	74
	<u>103,207</u>

From the above figures it is seen that only 17.79% of the population of the whole district are native-born whites of native parentage. Among those of foreign birth or parentage, the Irish, Italian and Scandinavian groups are largest. A growing colony of Syrians is recognized by residents of the community as a definite element but it does not figure significantly in 1910 census.

#### Irish

The Irish people form the largest nation group in the district. They have not settled in any one colony, however, but are scattered over the whole district and live under varied social conditions.

The Catholic churches and societies in the district realize that among the Irish with whom they must deal are a considerable number of shiftless and drinking people, with a standard of living much lower than the general standard of the neighborhoods in which they live. The churches have much to contend with in attempting to bring up this standard and the problems necessarily involve community matters as well as church activities.

#### Italians

The Italian colony is growing and spreading most rapidly. As seen above, the 1910 census shows nearly 24,000 in the district, and there probably have been substantial additions in the last three years. This colony presents a fertile field for the churches and other organizations to place educational and Americanizing forces and agencies at the service of the young people - if not the older people also. There are several recognized centers for work among the

Italians through which the acquaintance of these neighbors may be made.

The agencies referred to are:

1 - The Little Italy Settlement at 146 Union Street in the heart of the Italian district. The settlement is well acquainted with its neighbors and their needs, and is broadening its field of helpfulness. An Italian speaking nurse goes into the homes and is able to convince the mothers of better and more healthful ways of caring for the children. The Industrial department of the settlement affords opportunities to the girls and young women for using and developing their remarkable ability in artistic needle-work. The clubs and classes (described in the card file) give opportunities for volunteer service under the direction of leaders who understand the work and the people to whom the service is offered.

2 - The St. Aloysius Sodality, a society with a branch in the Sacred Heart Church, which is conducted by Father Peter Schroeder. Father Peter, as he is familiarly called, is a German priest, who is working with enthusiasm among the Italian families, especially among the boys. His club rooms are open every week night, and 100 boys crowd into them for pool and other games. A brass band has been organized recently. Father Peter has gained wide reputation for his work with truants, both from the public and parochial schools. He considers it his particular duty to see that all the boys are regular in attendance. He now has a plan for developing a sewing room where the women can work and sell their product. The church does not support this work and it is dependent altogether upon volunteer contributions. Father Peter says that he welcomes the co-operation of Protestants as well as Catholics; but he takes the stand also that

it is his place to see that Protestant boys who come under his influence attend their own church, and similarly that it is the business of the Protestant ministers working among Catholic boys to see that they go regularly to their Catholic churches. He makes the rounds of the families in his parish every two months, and is one of the best informed persons in the district on the conditions and needs of the people.

3 - Our Lady of Peace - church and parochial school. My information is limited to the fact that this is the only Italian Catholic church of the district.

4 - A Protestant Italian mission, open for religious purposes only, is located in the neighborhood of the settlement.

#### Norwegians

The Norwegians, as I was told by a well-informed member of their nationality, began coming to this neighborhood forty years ago. They were chiefly seamen. Later they moved farther in from the shore and have become successively carpenters and shop-keepers. Some became longshoremen and still follow that calling. Those who have prospered have moved into better neighborhoods in the district, mainly on First, Second and Third Streets. The poorer families are scattered through the streets near Hamilton Avenue and Henry Street. They have seven churches, six or more benefit societies, two singing societies, a young people's league which is social, and a number of temperance societies. Among the very interesting activities supported by one of their churches is a Home for Girls, to which Norwegian immigrant girls may come and stay until they find employment through the employment agency maintained in connection

with the home. The home has accommodations for twenty girls and cared for 385 different girls in 1912.

On Hamilton Avenue is a children's mission maintained by a Norwegian Lutheran society which holds services every night attended by children, most of whom are under fourteen. This mission is studying the movements of Norwegians with a view to determining the best place to build a large building for mission work.

A Norwegian druggist who is very ambitious for his people has started an experiment in giving them technical training in a limited way. He has found that many skilled workmen lack knowledge in some one line and that this stands in the way of their progress. For example, he finds seamen whose previous use of charts and compasses has given them a knowledge of mathematics which, with a little additional training, would fit them to become carpenters. So he is attempting to supply tutors who can bridge the gap by giving evening instruction in these special points.

Many of the Norwegian children are attending other Protestant chapels and mission Sunday Schools, while the parents continue to go to their own churches or both. The South Congregational Chapel Sunday School has a membership made up almost entirely of Norwegians. Many of the children in this chapel are attending the Industrial School on Fourth Street, a privately conducted school having about ninety children, ranging from kindergarten to the sixth grade. They are given their noon meal at the school.



There are very few social and recreational opportunities for Norwegian women and girls, and much might be accomplished in their own churches through parents' clubs or organizations of mothers aimed at something more than religious instruction or social gatherings alone. Many of the women join temperance societies and lodges which are mainly benefit societies, out of a desire to meet others in a social way.

### II. HOUSING

The dwellings in the district are of many types. There are large tenements providing for sixteen to twenty families to one entrance hall; 3-family tenements; old frame dwellings; rear cottages; basement dwellings; and there are a good many resident streets made up of one-family houses. The transition from brown stone family dwellings to 3-family apartments, which has been going on for some time, is not yet complete in the center of the district around the South Congregational Church. With the exception of the relatively small neighborhood between Hamilton Avenue and Cowans Bay where there are many vacant lots and many houses built on less than half the lot, the district is solidly built up.

The last report of the Tenement Commission showed thousands of dark rooms in the district. The report is now being checked up by the Commission, to see how many of the required alterations have been made. A new report is to be available within the next six weeks. It is probable that the number has been greatly reduced, as the campaign against dark rooms by the Tenement Commission in the last year has been very vigorous generally through-

out Greater New York. The alterations that have been made to meet the law, however, still leave much to be desired. Visits to a number of places listed as having dark rooms showed that windows had been put in on narrow covered air-shafts or into other rooms, or that rooms had been transformed into alcoves. Some tenants complained bitterly about this latter arrangement, for the change causes a draft through from front to back of their three or four rooms and makes heating more difficult. Some have tried to shut the rooms off again by means of curtains. One woman laid the death of her son from pneumonia to this remodeling of the house.

Two experiments in the district in providing good modern tenements seem to be successful from the point of view both of tenant and landlord.

The Tower Apartments on Hicks Street were built as an experiment in model housing about twenty-five years ago, and give the very best homes at the lowest rentals in this district. These apartments house 219 families and vary in size from two to five rooms. There are also in connection with the apartments thirty-four one-family houses with from six to nine rooms each. The tenements have a large inner court, free baths, and a reading room. The rents in the apartments are from \$1.80 to \$3.50 a week with an additional thirty cents a week where apartments have baths. The cottages rent from \$18 to \$25 a month. The landlords say that they are very strict about rents - that is landlords they do not mean to be lenient. The houses pay five per cent on the investment.

An old law tenement on Hoyt Street, which houses forty families, is another example of a large building with all outside rooms. The apartments have four rooms each and rent for \$2.50 a week. We found the halls in good condition. Unfortunately there was only one hall toilet to two families, but all were clean and in good condition and repair.

The three-story house made into a three-family tenement built jam up against each other is the type of dwelling prevalent in most parts of the district. Many of the buildings are in wretched repair. Old wall paper and wrecked plaster were found in hall-ways and accumulations of rubbish and garbage in the yards. Outdoor water-closets for first floor tenants, and often for all tenants, are used, and many were found to be filthy. It was possible to visit only a few tenements of this general nature in neighborhoods where there were whole blocks of similar buildings, but local well informed people stated these were typical. The fire escapes on a few tenements were placed in the rear only and were not accessible to tenants in the front apartments; and some roof fire escapes had a space of three feet between the ladder and the roof, making them dangerous for women and children, if not for men.

Rows of rear houses run parallel to the rows of front houses on a number of streets, - in some cases occupying the rear ends of the lots for the full length of the streets; and these rear houses share a tiny yard and the outdoor toilet with tenants in front.

Visits were made to about thirty-five basement houses. The worst conditions found were dirty halls and yards obstructed

with rubbish. There were a number of dark bed rooms and the yard toilets were in very bad condition. Only two cellar dwellings were found. In practically all the walls were dry.

The general impression received from social workers in the district whose work takes them into the houses is that bad housing conditions are widespread, and that the lack of clean and decent homes observed in this hasty survey, is fairly typical of the district. The families were quite aware that they were living under wretched conditions and seemed a bit demoralized by the acceptance of them. One little girl, when asked by a settlement worker where she lived, said, "Oh, we live in a rotten house." Plenty of evidences of wretched housekeeping and dirty homes are easily found.

Rents range from \$5 to \$6 per month in the poorest neighborhoods, to \$40 and \$50 for the good one-family house. The rents for four-room tenements average about \$9 and \$10.

Recommendations regarding a plan for dealing with housing problems are given in the conclusion of this report.

### III. HEALTH

The neighborhood has numerous advantages for attacking its health problems. The Long Island College Hospital and Dispensary are here. The tuberculosis clinic of the hospital has two nurses working the Red Hook district. The dispensary is within walking distance of most parts of the district, making it more easy for the nurses to persuade people to come for examination and treatment.

Moreover, the Brooklyn Department of Health maintains three milk stations, one being located in the center of each of the three

neighborhoods where the need is greatest. The work of the public health nurses connected with the milk stations is purely educational. They instruct mothers about infant feeding and in addition to instructions given individually, they hold frequent meetings when the babies are brought to be weighed. Modified milk is sold at cost. Arrangements through contributions from the Children's Aid Society, have been made for giving the milk when necessary.

Two school nurses from the Department of Health follow up the cases of children found by the medical inspectors to have physical defects, to see that they obtain the necessary treatment.

Nurses from Visiting Nurses' Department of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities, visit and care for the sick. Three nurses from this society work in the Red Hook territory. - one of whom works mainly among the Italians.

One of the school nurses in the district believes that there is a great need for providing cheap and nourishing lunches in School No. 6. She finds that many of the children who come under her care from this school are anaemic because under fed or wrongly fed at home.

The following tables of statistics furnished by the city health department give the only specific information regarding health conditions quickly obtainable for this report. These tables are suggestive, since the diseases causing the greatest number of deaths are very largely preventable.

DEATHS IN THREE WARDS, BOROUGHS OF BROOKLYN  
FROM SPECIFIED DISEASES - 1912

<u>Diseases</u>	<u>Sixth Ward</u>	<u>Tenth Ward</u>	<u>Twelfth Ward</u>
Measles	4	6	2
Scarlet fever	2	17	6
Whooping cough	5	5	3
Diphtheria	11	16	3
Smallpox	--	--	--
Pulmonary tuberculosis	119	98	81
Pneumonia	141	136	106
Diarrhoeal diseases under two years	43	66	39
<hr/>			
All causes under one year	138	157	101
All causes under five years	233	270	170
All causes over five years	<u>631</u>	<u>556</u>	<u>406</u>
	1002	983	677

In view of the importance of proper care of the teeth and the value of work to correct physical defects in school children as a means toward preventing future ill health, the following table is of interest:

EXAMINATIONS MADE OF CHILDREN ATTENDING TWO PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
in the  
Sixth, Tenth and Twelfth Wards - Year of 1912

<u>Public School</u>	<u>No. Children Examined</u>	<u>No. found needing Treatment</u>	<u>No. found with de- fects of teeth only</u>	<u>No. found with other defects than teeth only</u>
13	464	244	206	38
46	203	90	64	26
29	415	241	172	69
78	411	258	158	80
32	428	218	162	56
56	463	244	139	105
6	446	294	210	84
30	523	341	231	120
142	511	346	247	99
27	454	277	211	66

#### IV. CHARITABLE WORK

In dealing with poverty, the distinction between service and relief giving is now more generally recognized than even a few years ago. Service involves dealing with causes of poverty such as illness, lack of employment, bad housing, discouragement, etc., and looks toward making the recipient independent of charity. Relief-giving often forms a necessary part of the plan to put an individual or family on its feet again, but it is by no means all of it. Obviously, continued relief-giving alone, to persons who are not permanently disabled, is likely to be only superficial in its bearing on the problem of poverty, and may have the result of increasing instead of diminishing the need of future outside assistance.

In a neighborhood such as the district studied, which has a great deal of poverty caused by irregular employment, drunkenness, widowhood, the desertion of large numbers of wives and the lack of adjustment of a large foreign population to American methods and institutions, clearly churches and charitable organizations are called upon to do something more than the mere giving of alms.

Yet the emphasis upon alms giving alone still exists in the neighborhood to a great extent. I have found fourteen churches in the neighborhood and societies giving relief in the district who describe their work as "giving to the poor." This is probably not a complete record of the work in this direction and it does not give an estimate of the total amount nor the distribution of relief. The fact that many of these agencies are giving to applicants quite

independently of each other, indicated both great waste and great danger of pauperizing. One church attempts to supply shoes in response to all requests of children attending its parochial school, and its various societies claim to be able to meet the needs of all the deserving poor in their parish. This church is in the poorest section of the district and members of its parish are calling both upon the church and upon all other relief agencies for all the help that they can get. A nursing order of nuns has a three o'clock hour when the poor may come and apply for food and clothing; and the nuns informed me that they were not able to get half as much clothing as they need. A mission priest who is doing splendid work among the Italians said he gave away \$1,500 cash in relief last year, and is still helping as far as his funds will hold out. One local charitable agency expends the income from a bequest of \$30,000 which was provided for the help of orphans and poor children in what is called Old Brooklyn - of which this district forms a large part. A day nursery gives soup every noon to the infirm poor of its neighborhood. I did not list all the agencies which give Christmas dinners, but from the number who said they gave to several hundred, one gets the impression that Christmas in the district is adequately provided for.

Brooklyn has in the Bureau of Charities an agency whose main object is the rehabilitation of the family by using every resource possible. Working in close co-operation with the Bureau of Charities is the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, which supplies emergency relief for families and individuals in distress, and gives food, clothing and fuel for longer periods while an effort



is being made to work out a plan for making the family self sustaining. Other organized charities are the St. Vincent de Paul Society for Catholics, the Jewish Charities, and the Childrens' Aid Society, all of which co-operate with the Milk Stations in supplying milk for babies. These agencies have paid workers in the district who visit the homes and work with and for the families in solving their problems, whether this may be done immediately or whether it means months - or even years - of patient work. A district committee composed of church workers, volunteers and other interested persons meets weekly for discussion of individual cases and of such neighborhood problems as can be much better worked out through co-operation.

The work of organized charity is often misunderstood by persons who feel that not enough material aid is given, or that investigation is too prolonged. By joining forces with the district committee one comes to realize the bigger plans that must be made and the reason why they work slowly. One finds, too, that it is possible to hasten the solution through working with the district visitor who is usually greatly overburdened with investigations. This whole matter of co-operation among workers who go into the family homes, is so important and apparently so little recognized, that I feel it is worth while to go into some detail regarding its inadequacy in this neighborhood. For example, the following list suggests the number of social workers in the district who go into the family homes:

- Housing inspectors
- \* Truant officers (2)
- Juvenile probation officers (one for each of three religious groups)
- \* Adult probation officers (4)
- \* Church visitors
- \* Visitors from charitable organizations
- Tuberculosis nurses (2)
- \* Visiting nurses (3)
- \* Health department nurses
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children officer
- Children's Aid Society workers
- \* Settlement visitors
- \* Kindergarten teachers

In every case, because of the nature of the errand, the homes which have the greatest needs are the homes where visitors are most likely to come; and therefore the probability that many of them will visit the same homes is strong. A few of these agencies register their cases with the Confidential Exchange of information maintained by the Bureau of Charities, protecting in this way a family from repeated investigations by new workers. This registration means only a telephone call or written report, giving identifying information, such as the name and address of the family, and what agencies are assisting the family, but nothing about the circumstances. The inquirer can then go to the agencies and find out what they are doing, or plan to do, and what circumstances are known to them which will help interpret the need.

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\* Those indicated by stars work in the district only; the others work throughout the entire city and come into the district only on special cases.

Examples of the kind of duplication that results from independent work were found in some of the cases which were being visited at the same time by the Bureau of Charities and a church visitor. In one case both agencies had been contributing at the same time to the family support; each agency was visiting the family with the same regularity and was trying independently to work out an arrangement for taking care of a sick boy and making the mother self-supporting. In another case, two agencies were greatly interested in a mother who needed moral support much more than relief, and an understanding between visitors who were coming to her home would have brought about much better results. Recently the district committee of the Charities discovered that one family had been attending eight churches and for ten or fifteen years had been helped by all of them and by charitable agencies besides.

#### Recommendations.

The greatest needs in dealing with the poverty in the neighborhood are: first, registration, mentioned above, by churches and all other relief giving agencies. This would result in the relief work now being done reaching much further, and in less tendency to pauperize the families who ask most readily. Secondly, better co-operation with the district committee of the Bureau of Charities, making it a force that can actually change the character of the district. Members of a committee, interested in the same neighborhood, using its influence with a few families in a given tenement or in a given block, could raise the standard of the whole neighborhood. Third, a knowledge and appreciation of the resources that now exist for intelligent work among the individual families. The Bureau of

Charities has supplemented its work with individuals through a Social Service Department which deals with conditions that are found to be responsible for poverty, such as bad housing, tuberculosis, and such delinquency as is dealt with in the courts. This department is ready and wants to be helpful to all those who are looking for an opportunity for service.

#### V. DELINQUENCY

The courts have come to a realization of the importance of dealing with the delinquent according to the cause and probable effect of the offence as well as to the nature of it. To this end, separate courts have jurisdiction over special classes of cases which are selected for special treatment.

The district studied has the following special courts for dealing with distinct classes of lawbreakers.

1. The Butler Street Court deals with all ordinary offences of persons over sixteen years of age in the second assembly district. Connected with the Butler Street Court are two probation officers, one for men and one for women. These officers have committed to their care many first offenders. To the officer for men are committed boys arrested for crap-shooting, drinking and petty thefts, and to the women probation officer incorrigible girls and women who are habitual drunkards.
2. The Domestic Relations Court deals with all non-support cases for the city. Special probation officers are assigned to this court, two of whom take all cases of non-support for the second district.

3. The Adams Street Court takes all cases of disorderly women and has assigned to it a special probation officer who has placed under her care women arrested for soliciting.

4. The Children's Court hears all cases of child offenders for the borough of Brooklyn. Its probation officers are representatives of societies which give the services of their paid workers; and the cases are distributed according to religious affiliations rather than by neighborhoods.

There are four police-stations, precincts 145, 146, 147 and 148. Officers in charge of these stations are responsible for seeing that the district is free from disorder, public nuisance, gambling, vice, etc.

Commercialized vice is evidently not an acute problem of the Red Hook district. One street, Hamilton Avenue, has contained resorts frequented by sailors, but about six months ago this neighborhood had a "cleaning up" and it is generally thought to be in fairly good condition at present. There have been no cases of street walkers brought into the courts from any parts of the district since the Hamilton Avenue "clean up" and the impression on the part of persons familiar with the district and with whom I talked, is that there is no organized vice. There is thought to be a problem of immorality of the young girls, but this is a condition hard to deal with except by a broad program for raising the whole neighborhood standard.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children reported that they have had a number of cases from the Italian im-districts involving immorality of girls and crimes against girls,

but these seemed to be individual cases and not having any relationship to the neighborhood problems that was traceable in this study.

Next to its bad housing conditions, and perhaps just as great a menace, is the widespread condition of drunkenness and shiftlessness that is universally reported by persons whose work brings them into contact with the homes and families of the district. There are several spots that are known as nests of loose living, shiftlessness and general degradation. The squares between Smith and Hoyt, Warren, Baltic and Butler Streets make up the worst of these neighborhoods. From these blocks come most of the cases of intoxication in the Butler Street Court and there has been the rendezvous for many years, of notorious gangs of loafers and drinkers. The worst of these gangs are now said to be broken up, but there still remains one well known as the "White Head Gang." This gang is said to be so broken in spirit that "one policeman could handle seven of them," but the fact that it is tolerated is significant of the moral standards that prevail. There is a great deal of drinking on the part of the women as well as the men, "can rushing" is common, and it is reported to be a very common sight to see children going with pails into the saloons at the noon hour.

A similarly demoralized neighborhood exists on Rush Street where one block between Henry and Hicks Streets is regarded by social workers as a moral plague spot.

The Second District Court records seem to indicate some improvement in the district. For 1910 there were 1829 cases of intoxication against 1052 in 1911. (The records for 1912 are not yet published.) The total number of cases for the district show a

reduction from 3250 in 1910 to 2510 in 1911. The records of 100 probation cases from the Butler Street Court in the last year show that 40 per cent were cases of intoxication and habitual drunkenness. Thirty-five per cent of the cases were persons between seventeen and twenty-two years of age; these were cases of crap-shooting, intoxication, and, in the case of girls, of waywardness.

Reports of persons working the district indicate that there are violations of the law for which the court shows no record of prosecution. There were no prosecutions in 1911 for the sale of liquor to minors, but as was indicated above, children have been seen going for beer regularly. The court records show that 355 persons between sixteen and twenty years of age were held for trial, and, reasoning from the usual causes of law-breaking, it is safe to assume that these cases involved intoxication which, in its turn must have involved the illegal sale of liquor. The sale of tobacco to children and gambling in pool-rooms are other violations known to exist for which there is no record of prosecution.

As the Children's Court records are not kept by districts there is no way of estimating the amount of juvenile delinquency for this district, or for the neighborhoods from which most of the cases come. If the probation officers' reports are any indication, it would seem that a comparatively small number of children from this district come in contact with the law. The probation cases are divided among Protestant, Jewish and Catholic probation officers. Neither the Protestant nor Jewish officers have any cases in the district at the present time. The Catholic officer who is a representative of the St. Vincent de Paul Society says that he has not had more than fifty cases in the whole district in the last year.

The Italian boys who used to give the court considerable trouble apparently have been kept out of mischief through Father Peter Schroeder's Boys' Clubs, and are not going into Court any more. According to the school record, only twenty-two boys were sent to truuant schools or reformatories during 1912.

The fact that the records do not show cases of delinquency in court, however, is not a necessary indication of the lack of waywardness of mischief on the part of the children, or that they are dealt with in other ways. Further study would be necessary to determine the extent of delinquency.

The problem of drunkenness is closely related to the existence of a large class of casual workers and the fact of plenty of saloons throughout the district ready to sell to drunkards. The superintendent of the Visiting Nurse Association and workers in the district where are found most of the drunken seamen, have suggested that a most worth-while experiment would be the establishment of the English type of coffee houses somewhere along the water-front. These are places where coffee, sandwiches and beer can be bought cheaply with a commission for the proprietors on the sale of soft drinks, thus providing an incentive for the sale of non-intoxicating drinks. The places could be made attractive and comfortable as gathering places, and should serve as substitutes for the saloon.

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\* See reference to Italians, earlier in report.



Any beginning, however, of the neighborhood effort to attack this problem of drunkenness should come by way of a co-operative effort to arouse the worst of these neighborhoods to a desire for higher standards of decency and self respect. At the same time, united neighborhood interest in the work of the district would undoubtedly help to bring about stricter enforcements of the laws regarding the sale of liquor and of pool-room regulations. The Bureau of Charities has a Department of Courts whose director would gladly work in co-operation with a group of persons who would visit and report conditions in pool-rooms, saloons, small stores, about which the police are likely to be indifferent unless stirred by force of public opinion.

#### VI. SCHOOLS

Churches and other organizations interested in the neighborhood welfare work have a great opportunity for service through the medium of the schools.

1. The district has ten public and several parochial schools and according to the census for 1910, had a school population of nearly 18,000.
2. An examination of the records for School District No. 28 shows that there are several special needs for which united neighborhood action might obtain recognition.
3. A united neighborhood demand for adequate school facilities and, still more important, for the right kinds of schools to fit the neighborhood's and the children's special needs, will often bring a response more promptly and effectively because of the

feeling that the citizens are standing together back of their demands.

#### Kindergartens

In neighborhoods where homes are crowded, where play space is lacking, and where the streets are dangerous, obviously we have most need of kindergartens. Opportunities for reaching parents through kindergarten children are greater than in the grades above and so the kindergarten may help the home. For the part of the district of most interest to the South Congregational Church, (that part lying between Hamilton Avenue, Van Brunt Street, Warren Street and the Canal), special statistics about the school children were obtained. These figures show that there are 2529 children four and five years old in the district, but that only 722, or 28 per cent of these children are in kindergartens.

These figures are corroborated by the district superintendent of public schools, who states seven hundred children as the total number provided for in kindergartens in all the schools in the 28th district.

Some few private kindergartens are maintained by churches and settlements, but a fair estimate would give two hundred as the outside number provided for in this way. These private enterprises are filling a need as long as nothing better can be obtained, but with

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\* Statistics from Permanent Census Board of the Board of Education.

the limited equipment possible in most of them, even if many more were started, the results would amount to very little compared with the neighborhood demand for sufficient public kindergartens and the neighborhood interest in these kindergartens after they are established.

In a neighborhood so largely foreign and containing many families with very small incomes, children leave school in large numbers as soon as the law allows. This condition is not always the result of necessity, but because neither parent nor children see anything to be gained by longer school attendance. The children who go out at fourteen drop into chance jobs which have no training value and which are likely to leave them always in the field of unskilled labor.

In the district whose boundaries are given above, it was found that of 1,941 children\* fourteen and fifteen years old, 1,172, or 59.3 per cent were not attending school in 1910. The 1910 census for the whole district shows a similar proportion. Except through the assistance of individual schools, we have no way of finding out what specific reasons the children give for leaving, or what becomes of them.

In view of these facts it is important to make sure that the schools are giving some opportunities for industrial and commercial work and to try to see that they provide other training to make children commercially and industrially intelligent. The public schools have sewing for girls in all grades, cooking for the seventh and eighth grades, and shop work for the boys in the seventh and eighth grades. I could not find any industrial work of any sort in the parochial schools, with the exception of a little sewing for

\* Investigation of Permanent Census Record.

the girls. A recognition of the fact that industrial work will hold the children's interest and will give them training in the use of their hands is shown in the work of several churches and settlements which reported voluntary classes in sewing, cooking and wood work. These attempts, like the kindergartens must, of necessity, be greatly limited and are valuable chiefly as demonstrations.

It would be greatly worth while for church workers and social workers in any school district, and especially in one of this kind, to make it their business to know why the children are dropping out and what they are going into. This information would be useful when conferring with the School Board about the kind of schools that would fill the local need. It would help also in making parents and children recognize the value of longer school attendance. Non-attendance and irregular attendance at school are problems best solved by neighborhood co-operation. In 1912, 578 truants were reported in District 23. In the same year the Permanent Census Board found 236 children of school age not attending school at all; 82 per cent of these latter children were illegally detained by their parents. The causes of non-attendance are frequently home conditions, as illness, poverty and often real indifference - such as could be solved by a visitor between the home and the school. The truant officers usually have so many cases that it is impossible for them to make the number of visits needed and to meet the real problem that is back of the truancy.

A beginning toward solving the truancy problem and toward establishing a relation between the churches, neighborhood residents, and schools, could be made through a school visitor

or a "visiting teacher." Work of this kind is done in some of the schools in Brooklyn under the auspices of the Juvenile Probation Association which has its headquarters at 102 Court Street. This organization sends its workers into the schools where, under the directions of the principals, they visit the homes of the children who present special problems of neglect, waywardness, poverty, etc. The school visitor may call on various organizations to help in solving the special needs she finds in the home, so that she really stands between the school and these organizations and individuals who are glad to contribute assistance and personal service where it is most needed. If one church or group of churches could support such a visitor in connection with the Juvenile Probation Association, co-operating, of course, with other rehabilitating agencies in the neighborhood, the results would be more far reaching than many of the small individual undertakings which the churches are now supporting separately.

## VII. INDUSTRY

The district boundaries, - the Gowanus Canal, the Bay, and the Downtown Business district - make this section an industrial as well as a business neighborhood. The Erie Basin which lies between Gowanus Canal and Duffermilk Channel, has the largest industries, most of them machine shops employing many skilled workers. Along the Canal are gas works, a brewery, tile works and a variety of smaller manufacturing places. Along the river at the opposite side of the district the industries extend the length of the water front, running back as far as Columbia Street.

The New York Dock Company in the Erie Basin has just completed what is said to be the largest dry dock in the world. Their average number of employees is estimated to be 2,500, a large percentage of whom are skilled workers. Montgomery Ward and Company, a mail-order house of Chicago, is said to have leased one of their largest buildings with the intention of employing 10,000 workers.

The proposed water front improvement which is to extend from Brooklyn Bridge to 116th Street is likely to bring about many changes in this district. The plan includes an assembling freight yard in the Erie Basin, and a marginal railway. As there is a great deal of open space for building in the Erie Basin, this region is likely to become wholly manufacturing with the completion of the proposed improvements. Under the new plan it is thought that the longshoremen who form a large part of the population of this district now, will depart, and the warehouses will allow goods to be transferred directly without unpacking. At present the Irish and Scandinavians who have been the longshoremen are giving way to Italians. The latter are supplied in gangs by foremen. It would be worth while to find out further what is becoming of the old type of longshoremen, and under what conditions the Italians are doing the work.

The numbers of factories having offices and the presence of many knitting mills, paper box factories, hair goods manufactories and fruit packing establishments, indicate that there must be a great many women and girls employed in this district.

The monthly bulletin issued February 1st, 1913, by the Bureau of Factory Inspection gives the addresses of forty tenements

in the district licensed for home work. The workers in the Little Italy Settlement have not found very much home work being done, however.

No facts are available regarding child labor except in the number of children discharged from school with work certificates. The records of children at work are not kept by districts. The factory inspector who is acquainted with the neighborhood says that it would be well worth while for persons interested in the district to make a study of child labor, but referred us to the records for more specific information.\*

An important side of commercial and industrial life of the neighborhood is found in the large number of small stores. Smith, Court, Columbia and Van Brunt Streets are made up of small stores, bakeries, groceries, house furnishing stores, second hand shops, etc. Sections of Vicks and Hoyt Streets are also business districts. The stores on a few streets are extremely dirty, the food is not taken care of, and vegetables are exposed to the street. There are two organizations of business men in the district, one known as the Erie Basin Board of Trade, and the other as the Smith Street Board of Trade to which many of the storekeepers and real estate men belong.

An employment agency recently started by the St. Vincent de Paul Society was the only one, as far as I could learn, which attempts to handle the problem of casual employment. This agency uses the parish house of the Church of the Visitation and has no paid workers. They find it very difficult to know what to do with the class of men who come to them for whom they cannot give recommen-

dations. The large number of longshoremen who work very irregularly, and the fact that a new class is taking even this undesirable work from the unskilled workers who have lived for some time in the district, shows the great need of an agency really equipped to deal with the problem of unemployment.

To obtain any accurate information about industrial conditions would mean a greater undertaking by itself than this month's bird's eye view of general conditions in the district. Such a study would be well worth while as a piece of neighborhood work because there are undoubtedly many workers both living and working in the districts. Conditions under which the women and girls work and the possibility of supplying recreation for these workers offer other considerations in a study of the industries. More than a year ago some few visits by local persons were made to places in the district employing Italians particularly. One place was found which employed a number of girls where conditions were said to be so bad that it meant the loss of her reputation for it to be known of a girl that she worked there. The establishment next door, which also employed girls, dismissed five minutes earlier in the evening so that their girls would not have to meet those of the neighboring establishment when leaving their work.

#### VIII. RECREATION

No play space is available between Hamilton Avenue and Atlantic Avenue. The single park and playground in all the neighborhood is in the part of the district which has the most open space. The school playgrounds are small but useful, - principally however,



for organized games for the older children. This fact taken together with the presence of 18,000 children between the ages of six and fourteen in the district will speak for itself. I talked with a number of persons, - ministers and social workers in the district - who were keenly interested in establishing more playgrounds, but they feel that there is very small prospect of the city providing them.

The only hopeful sign looking to public recreation is a recommendation for a recreation pier at the foot of State Street to be included in the plan for water front improvement. The secretary of the Parks and Playgrounds Association reports that he has gone over the district most carefully and finds no property in it which the city could buy. On the other hand, a casual study of the district shows that there are many old frame buildings and one story buildings bringing very low rents in neighborhoods where playgrounds are most needed. The city owns property on Hicks Street between Carroll and President, the rentals for which are not large. The question of legality of the use of this property for playgrounds, however, has been seriously raised.

#### Recreation for Boys and Young Men

There are two public evening recreation centers in the district, in schools No. 6 and 27. Both are for young men and boys. No. 6 has also one room in which a club of girls meets. No. 6 is a large, new building with a gymnasium, lecture hall and plenty of room for games. It is in a neighborhood where the homes are least attractive and it fills a very great need in taking what boys

it does from the streets and pool-rooms.

Excellent provision is made for the young men and boys also by Catholic churches, five of which reported club rooms or a club house equipped with pool tables, bowling alleys, etc. Reports from two settlements and from an Episcopal institutional chapel show work being done for both boys and girls. The Boy Scout movement has made a beginning of work in the neighborhood. At present there is an active troop with twenty-three members in one church, and the central organization is glad to establish troops wherever scout masters can be found. On the whole there seems to be more than usually generous provision for young men and boys in the way of recreation, but we <sup>always</sup> ~~will~~ have to do a great deal before we have provided for all. There are, according to the 1910 census, about 10,000 boys and girls between fourteen and twenty years of age in this district. A special committee gathered facts on pool-rooms which show that there are many young boys loafing in these places and hanging about on the streets - a state of affairs which would indicate that there is still plenty of room for more clubs of the kind that are already being carried on.

#### Recreation for girls

Large numbers of girls are employed in the district and many of them have their homes here also. In the moving picture shows on the brightly lighted streets one meets many of them at night seeking their pleasure. We find very little aside from the picture shows in the way of recreation being done for the girls, especially for the older girls of the district. Two of the Episcopal churches have branches of the Girls' Friendly Society and two

settlements have clubs and hold parties attended by girls. A reading club in a branch of the Public Library has interested thirty of them in good books.

It seems rather clear that the next and most important provision to be made in recreation opportunities for the girls is the establishment of places which will be made attractive to them and where, under good influences, they can meet young men.

A Recreation Committee which has made investigations of all moving picture shows and dance halls in Brooklyn, made the following report on the moving picture shows in this district: -

"The places for the most part are small and badly lighted. Eight have been reported to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children as admitting children contrary to the law. (The officers of the society are special officers and can arrest proprietor, ticket seller, or anyone connected with the show.) Fourteen have been reported to the Fire Department as very dark and permitting smoking, and the proprietors have been warned that unless the smoking should be discontinued, the licenses would be revoked. Four have been closed since July and the licenses have been revoked."

of two

Visits to some of the theatres in the district have verified the report that the lighting is inefficient, that the places are small, and that the films supplied are old and worn out. The pictures themselves were, on the whole, very good. Two unused churches in the District have been turned into moving picture theatres. In these, the ventilation and lighting are good and the places are run with an intention of making them as good and wholesome as possible.

### Pool-Rooms

Reports on twenty-two pool rooms have been received from a committee of men who made visits to ascertain to what extent young boys were found loafing and playing in them, and whether or not there was gambling in any. Gambling was reported in five and the impression was given the men that in most of them gambling goes on. The average ages of those found in these places were from seventeen to twenty-five years. No reports showed that boys under sixteen are allowed to play.

The real menace of the average pool-room is to the boys from seventeen to twenty. Much more than saloons, the pool-rooms have been the breeding place for thieving, hold-ups, and the forming of vicious habits. The young boys should not be in them, and the fact that most of them form the habit of going because nothing else is provided is a serious reflection on the community.

### Dance Halls

The report of the Recreation League gives only three dance halls in the district, two on Hamilton Avenue, and one on President Street. A fourth on Atlantic Avenue, which is on the outer edge of the district, has been closed up after several investigations and reports by the League. The three dance halls reported on are frequented largely by sailors from the Sailor's Home and by women over thirty years of age. Conditions were found to be pathetic rather than vicious; the men and women all seemed to be dope fiends. They were dull and heavy, danced very little and listened to wretched music. The visitors have gone repeatedly on Saturday and Sunday nights and have never found any young girls

in the halls.

As with other phases of social and betterment work, the supplying of recreation needs to be a co-operative movement. The individual attempts of churches to provide clubs for children and young people result often in their drawing in the children of other denominations over whose homes they can exert no influence.

The needs seem to be as follows: -

- 1 - Playgrounds
- 2 - A recreation center for girls
- 3 - The formation by individuals or churches of branches of movements like the Boy Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls, Girls' Friendly Societies, Working Girls' Clubs and other similar organizations with well tried plans that have already proved successful. Clubs of this kind are more likely to be permanent and offer a great many more opportunities for the leader in enlisting young people's interest.

An excellent suggestion that was offered by one of the church members who visited the pool-rooms, was, that any place where recreation should be offered by any of the organizations should be brightly lighted, so that it would stand out as a bright and attractive spot on the block. It is apparent in going about the streets that a bright light itself is often the sole reason for the gathering of groups on certain corners or in front of pool-rooms or saloons.

### CONCLUSIONS

A summary of the various needs mentioned in each section of the report includes: -

- 1 - Better housing conditions.
- 2 - Greater co-operation in charitable work.
- 3 - A study of industrial conditions.
- 4 - More kindergartens in the schools.
- 5 - Better preparation of school children for work.
- 6 - A school visitor.
- 7 - Playgrounds.
- 8 - Organized branches of boys' and girls' clubs.
- 9 - Recreation centers for girls.
- 10 - Better law enforcements in saloons, pool-rooms and small stores.
- 11 - Coffee houses along the water front.
- 12 - Penny lunches in the schools.

Such a miscellaneous collection of wants can be presented only as a background to be considered in forming a program and not as a program in itself to be undertaken by one person or group of persons at one time. It offers opportunities for private philanthropy, for personal service, and for co-operation on the part of all churches and social workers in obtaining for the neighborhood greater benefits through city appropriation, legal protection and education to higher standards of living.

A practical program would be the selection of one of these needs to be dealt with in a definite way, with the hope that the social forces of the district, having once united, will hold together to deal with the other needs in turn.

The housing problem, given first on the list, offers perhaps the greatest opportunity for accomplishing results in bettering the community: first, because the homes must be made livable, decent and safe, before one can do anything for the families in them; second, because these results can be made very definite by

bringing all dwellings up to legal standards in sanitation and safety, and by educating the tenants to keep premises up to standards after the landlords have done their part.

Moreover, the housing work offers no sectarian difficulties that might retard persons interested in the welfare of the district from coming together for work. As a starting point I should recommend the preparation and use in the district of a housing exhibit for the organization of which the following plan is submitted:

#### Brief Outline of Plan

##### I - The exhibit would include:

- a - A general housing exhibit with special reference to the tenement, which is under preparation by the tenement department of the Bureau of Charities.
- b - An exhibit of good and bad neighborhood conditions by means of photographs, charts and maps.
- c - Stereopticon lectures and moving pictures on the subject of housing and sanitation and general health topics.

##### II - The use of the exhibit:

To be set up in various parts of the district, in churches, settlements, or in stores, for several days at a time and to be advertised in each neighborhood.

##### III - Organization.

- a - A central organizing committee which should include several representative ministers from the district; representatives from the Bureau of Charities; settlement workers; someone to advise about preparation and propaganda work for the exhibit.
- b - A committee to prepare the exhibit. This committee would include social workers familiar with the district, a nurse, a charity organization visitor, a probation officer, et al.

c - A series of committees to arrange for showing the exhibit in the particular neighborhood in which each committee is interested.

These committees should include all the persons who could be interested in neighborhood work.

The exhibit itself should accomplish much educationally among tenants and landlords. But it is more important that it should pave the way for other constructive work.

The next step would be an experiment in actually improving housing conditions, such perhaps as the Octavia Hill system. This would involve finding a landlord who would be willing to turn over to a group organized for this purpose a number of his houses. These houses would be put into good sanitary condition to start with, and a rent collector would be employed whose business it would be to educate the tenants into keeping the tenements in first class condition. In connection with the rent collecting, the group could maintain a model tenement home where neighborhood groups would meet for instruction. Here is the object of the plan as stated by the director of such a tenement home now being maintained in another part of Brooklyn: "we want to see what we can do to better housing conditions by going at the tenant along the line of selfish interest. That is, we will show him first that he has rights as a tenant, then that there are certain things that he may demand from his landlord; we will show him second that he has responsibilities as a tenant."

In the course of preparing and presenting the housing exhibit, it should become clear just what extent the social forces of the neighborhood can and will unite. A getting together in



some informal way perhaps, such as in monthly luncheons, may come about very naturally and a program for making the district a clean, safe and wholesome place in which to live, could be worked out.

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